

IRS TAX TIP 2004-01

AVOID HEADACHES, PREPARE TAX RETURN EARLY

Earlier is better when it comes to working on your taxes. The IRS encourages everyone to get a head start on tax preparation. Not only do you avoid the last-minute rush, early filers also get a faster refund.

There are seven easy ways to get a good jump on your taxes long before the April 15 deadline rolls around:

1. Gather your records in advance. Make sure you have all the records you need, including W-2s and 1099s. Don't forget to save a copy for your files.
2. Get the right forms. They're available around the clock on the IRS Web site, www.irs.gov, under "Forms and Publications."
3. Take your time. Don't forget to leave room for a coffee break when filling out your tax return. Rushing can mean making a mistake — and that can be expensive!
4. Double-check your math and Social Security number. These are among the most common errors on tax returns. Taking care on these reduces your chances of hearing from the IRS.
5. Get the fastest refund. When you file early, you get your refund faster. Using e-filing with direct deposit might get you a refund in as little as 10 to 15 days.
6. E-filing is easy. E-filing catches math problems, provides confirmation your return has been received and gives you a faster refund.
7. Don't panic. If you have a problem or a question, remember the IRS is there to help. Try the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov. Or call the toll-free customer service number at 1-800-829-1040.

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